THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

October/November 2014 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

We Need Joy

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Historically persecuted by other Christians for their refusal to serve in the military, to pay tithes to the established churches, and to take off their hats or swear an oath in court, many Quakers were jailed; some, like Mary Dyer, were executed. They would hardly seem the most likely denomination to espouse joy, and yet one of their most popular hymns is entitled, "How Can I Keep From Singing?"

Especially now as we are besieged with nightmares like ebola in West Africa, the killing by police of an unarmed black youth in Missouri, and the beheading of an American journalist in Syria, it is tempting to succumb to a gloomy fatalism. It's hard to be hopeful, much less joyful as we watch the disintegration of Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Nigeria, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, etc. Global warming, the growing wealth gap, violence against women, racism, child abuse, and countless other injustices are more than depressing — they are downright terrifying.

Sometimes hope is elusive and joy is out-of-town with no forwarding address, and yet, how can we function without them? When I was a teen, I sold a newspaper door-to-door called *Grit,* which focused exclusively on upbeat stories. I figured there must be an online equivalent today, so I googled "joyful news" and was directed to an evangelical Christian website, loaded with scripture, but absent actual news stories, joyful or otherwise. Not to be deterred, I searched for "happy news" and found a site with several stories, most notably a bizarre account of a man who rescued a baby wombat in Australia. Apparently, wombats often graze by the sides of Aussie roads

Harvey Ball

and are sometimes struck and killed by motorists. In July of this year, a driver saw a dead wombat and pulled over to check if the marsupial had a surviving infant in her pouch. He discovered a tiny creature, shivering and trying vainly to nurse from her dead mother. The good Samaritan called a wildlife help line to place the baby in the care of a ranger named Kim Hunter, who bottle-fed the wombat every four hours and will keep caring for the creature, whom she calls Laura, until she can be released safely into the wild.

While this anecdote might seem a trivial antidote to calamities like war, it struck a chord in me because the anonymous man who rescued the wombat acted selflessly. All too often, those of us who care for the poor do so, at least in part, because of the accolades we receive for our ministry. Like corporate lawyers working for a promotion, or employees vying for a raise, or philanthropists trying to secure a spot in Heaven, so many of us are pretty selfish. We crave popularity, wealth, power, and a good reputation. We might not really care very much about the recipients of our good deeds. But the person who stops to check out road kill can hardly expect more

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Under the Bridge

by David Janicki

Editor's Note: The following reflection is by a 23-year-old University of Dallas graduate, who majored in Economics, History, and Spanish. In July 2014, he left the United States to assist Dominican activist Felix Cepeda in establishing a Catholic Worker community to serve the homeless in the Dominican Republic.

It is hard to believe that I have already spent three weeks here in the Dominican Republic (DR). With each day, my love for the Dominican people and their beautiful country increases. I thank the Lord for this opportunity.

Much has transpired since my arrival: we have set up a bank account for the Worker House; toured (on foot) nearly every suburb and historical site in Santa Domingo; brought food to, and established relations with the homeless throughout the city; participated in three pacific social justice protests, which, for me personally, were all extremely enjoyable and educational; celebrated the Mass at over 12 different chapels; joined a weekly praise and worship group; and began establishing a network with several private associations, all of which have expressed interest in helping us achieve our mission of creating a sustainable Catholic Worker Community here in the DR.

Seeing how the Spirit works through both myself and Felix has been one of the most rewarding parts of this experience. The way our personalities complement each other truly is remarkable, and gives credence to the beautiful design that the Divine architect, commonly referred to

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Vol. 31, No. 2 THE October/November 2014

CATHOLIC RADICAL

Published every two months by:
The Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker Community
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Founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

Bridge

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as the Lord, possesses. Felix's spirituality manifests itself through action and compels him to radically combat social injustice. Whereas, my spirituality manifests itself primarily through dialogue and thought. The combination of these somewhat polarizing approaches has fostered quite a team, as well as a wonderful friendship.

Felix and I were blest with some wonderful news earlier this week; we received confirmation that two very generous servants of Christ have donated to our Catholic Worker Community. Unfortunately, neither Felix nor I are well versed in the technical and legal facets associated with transferring funds internationally. This truth, combined with the inefficient and complicated banking system here in the DR, increasingly tries the patience of Felix, whose fiery passion and genuine love toward the homeless community continues to amaze me. God bless him, and please grant us patience.

We are unable to begin the process of renting a Catholic Worker house until we receive the funds. Thus, while we wait and pray for the logistics to sort themselves out, Felix and I have been making and delivering sandwiches to the homeless four times a week. I lack the writing talent to articulate the beautiful, as well as disturbing, emotions I felt during these interactions. Nevertheless, I will try.

We woke up at 5:30 this morning to deliver breakfast to several homeless people living under an extremely busy overpass in the capital Santa Domingo. We have been coming to this particular site for the past two weeks, due to its convenient location. Given that we do not have a car, we are forced to rely on the newly constructed subway system to commute around the city. The stop located directly across the street from the overpass is titled "Los Tainos," [after the first native people Columbus met]. Prior to this morning, we have been coming to Los Tainos around 9:30 in the evening to pray, converse, and (most importantly) bring sandwiches to the homeless. Although this area is much more frightening at night, the loneliness and suffering that these individuals experience daily is far more apparent in the morning. Felix often pokes fun at the obvious irony of this busy landscape. On one side of the street, lies the polished metro station, which represents technological and social progress. Yet, less than ten feet away from this engineering marvel, an elderly woman and seven young to middle-aged men can be seen sleeping under the overpass. These individuals have no public voice. Society judges them, in some cases quite accurately, as drug addicts and failures, whose current situation resulted from their own foolish actions. The city, state, community, and even the Church want nothing to do with them. Upon our arrival, Felix and I say a quick prayer, and then cross the street.

Fritz Eichenberg

Those who cannot see Christ in the poor are atheists indeed.
Dorothy Day

The mountains of trash piled under the overpass are the first thing that caught my attention. Although I had experienced a terrible odor during our evening visits, seeing such a quantity of garbage was shocking to say the least. Shoes and shirts are a rare luxury among the homeless. Although a few of them were fortunate enough to have a piece of cardboard or a discarded garment to use as a pillow or bed, the majority slept straight on the concrete. At 6:45 a.m., only the elderly woman, along with her family of stray dogs and cats, is awake. It should be noted that the night before, when Felix and I brought them dinner, we saw this poor lady, using a small bucket of dirty water and an even dirtier towel, bathing herself and I was nearly brought to tears after she so graciously said thank you for the small sandwich we brought her.

After we distributed the sandwiches to them and prayed with those who wanted to, Felix and I spent roughly 30 minutes conversing with three of the gentlemen lying at the far end of the overpass. Despite having every reason to curse life and drown in self-despair, they were smiling and praising God. Seeing how thankful and nice they were to us for bringing them food (which was simply a small bologna sandwich) was beyond beautiful. I realize now that we are no different. God is with them, and they are His children. They say the eyes are the gateway to the soul. Well, I looked into their eyes as we departed and, without a doubt, I saw Christ. Ω

Letting Tumult Cease

by Susan Schaller

On August 16th, my mother died, one week before her 91st birthday. I was in rural New England, almost a foreign country for this Wyomingite/Californian. The green of deciduous forests is almost a foreign color. And when the news of my mother's death, along with all the uninvited feelings, memories, and reality of death, hit me, all the foreign New England faces sharpened the solitude one feels when Death stares.

Life, however, was kind. My only friend in New England drove to see me. Her face, caring words, and supportive hugs were like the long awaited drink of water, after too many minutes in the dry heat of the West's worse drought in over one hundred years. (That's why the green looks foreign!)

Two days after being orphaned, I traveled to another foreign place called Worcester. Claire and Scott invited me to stay with them. I was longing for people, community and opportunity to be of service, away from the neighborhood of self-pity and negativity. After being fetched from the transportation hub, I was transported to their Monday hub of runners, food, and laughter. That welcome was the beginning of a week of loving and healing community, that is, "with as if one."

To strive to be together, to see our selves in others and others in our selves is not easy. To work for unity, for togetherness, is the work of peace, and it is absolutely true that it begins with me, inside. Years ago, I would not have been able to travel to a foreign place, and to strangers, while riding such turbulent waves of emotions. It would have been easy to isolate, to feel sorry for myself, and to tell everyone I met that my mother had just died, and ask them to pay lots of attention to me.

How can we be peace? Words are easy, but what do we do? How can we love our enemies, turn the other cheek, love someone who is taking advantage of us, or worse? These are questions I asked for decades, but never heard an answer to while I searched with my intellect. I had to move from my head to my heart, from the paralysis of analysis to action. Then the answers came.

Love is a verb. Saying you care can be worthless, compared to serving some soup, listening, or driving to another state to a friend whose mother has just died. Being present, patient, and compassionate is the work of peace. I had to find ways to grow patience, compassion, tolerance, and the strength to deny my wants in order to love another.

I had to look inside to see what was in me preventing the growth of love. With the help of friends, spiritual advisors, counselors – whoever makes up the village we all need – I uncovered, discovered, and discarded many fears and defenses that separated me from people. I began to see the fear and drama-loving ego, the chattering brain, the urges, and feelings as only the superficial "me" – the reactive, immature person that could not listen, be patient or look for my brother and sister in the angry person in front of me. As I saw more clearly, I was able to face pain and fears — the roots of war — and begin to replace them with love, faith, gratitude and joy: the roots of peace.

I was able to sit alone, understanding, at last, that we must be able to be still, in order to stop our crazy thoughts and feelings, and dig deeper. I discovered that here are many tools, with different names, depending on the tradition or century: contemplation, meditation, ceaseless prayer, service, inspirational study, renunciation or training the senses and attention, and fellowship, to name some.

The greatest tool for transforming anger to joy and gratitude, to follow faith instead of fear, is meditation (or contemplation). I memorize inspirational passages, then practice slowly, concentrating on one word at a time, without being distracted by semantics or visualization or associations. I need to continually attend to only one word at a time.

It is work, but steadily, the principles I attend to become a part of me, and I become able to become patient, loving and responsive (not reactive), even in Worcester where I found out that I am not orphaned; I am a child of God, along with my brothers and sisters all over the planet. Ω

I weave a silence onto my lips;
I weave a silence into my mind;
I weave a silence within my heart;
…Let all tumult within me cease;
Fold me, Lord, into Thy Peace.

An ancient Gaelic prayer

Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!
Place your soul in the brightness of His glory!
Place your heart in the image of the divine essence,
and transform yourself by contemplation,
utterly, into the image of His Divinity,
that you might feel the way
His friends feel as they taste
the hidden sweetness that God Himself set aside
at the beginning for those who love Him!
Casting aside all things
from this false and troubled world
which ensnare those who love them blindly,
give all your love to Him
who gave Himself in all for us to love,
whose beauty the sun and moon admire.
And whose gifts are abundant, precious,
and grand without end.

Saint Clare of Assisi

Joy

(Continued from Page 1)

than revulsion from the public.

When someone is moved to act in some way to benefit another without any apparent benefit to themselves, he or she makes a radical break from the selfishness which is the heart of war and injustice. Such acts often appear quite small. A friend of mine in college used to say, "The Kingdom of God is a laundromat where people clean the lint filters in the driers *after* their clothes are done."

On August 17th, a runner who saw a runaway double stroller plunge into Boston's Brookline Reservoir rescued the children by sprinting to the steep embankment and jumping ten feet down into the water. After refusing to give more than her first name, she told the press: "The babies were down, so I was kind of thinking in my head, 'I hope I hear them cry. I hope I hear them cry.' So as soon as I flipped the stroller one of the little girls started crying. So I was like, 'OK. They were not in there for too long.'"

"It's unbelievable," Boston Police Seargent. Robert Disario said. "I think God has a plan or there is a higher power that has a plan. She was meant to be here to save those kids."

Admit it. We love stories like this, all the more so because the heroine took no personal credit. She just did what was right. She didn't wonder how deep the water was or whether or not there were sharp objects on the bottom or whether the weight of the water-logged stroller would drag her down too. Her focus was entirely on those children.

Here in New England, we are all familiar with another story which defies self-interest. When the board of directors of a supermarket chain called Market Basket fired Arthur T. Demoulas as CEO, the workers and management walked off their jobs to get him back. For more than a month, workers protested and many customers joined a boycott, until their efforts restored the beloved owner. How often do we see something like that? The workers were not striking for higher wages or better working conditions. They were showing loyalty to a boss who had been kind and fair to them. They risked losing their jobs to bring him back. Simply amazing.

And then, I can hardly ignore the accolades heaped on James Foley, the

free-lance journalist who was beheaded by Islamic extremists in Syria. Foley had been a hostage previously in Libya, but refused to back away from going into harm's way to provide the world with the most intimate view of war and its casualties. One of the hundreds who drove more than an hour to attend Foley's funeral at Our Lady of the Rosary church in Rochester, New Hampshire, told *The Boston Globe*, "James Foley was like Christ. He wanted to bring the truth and suffered greatly."

Like Christ, Foley, the Brookline runner, and wombat's rescuer were moved to compassion by the plight of another. It does not matter whether they succeeded in their efforts or whether anyone ever learned of them. There is integral power in selflessness, transformative power. My artist-activist friend Tom Lewis used to say, "There is value in someone going to jail for their conscience, even if no one knows about it."

Bernard Malamud captured Tom's idea in **The Fixer** wherein the main character endures years of solitary hell in jail only to discover at the end that his imprisonment is a national cause célèbre. Andre Schwarz-Bart, in his masterpiece **The Last of the Just**, says that the secret suffering of a single individual has the mystical power to stay God's hand from destroying all of humanity. Jim Douglass says in his book **Lightning East to West** that love of enemies, perhaps the most selfless of all love, has limitless spiritual power. Authors like Steinbeck, Dostoevsky, Dickens, Greene, and Endo embedded Christ figures into the hearts of their novels. Even a secular spy master like John Le Carré has a husband and wife who are both Christ figures in his book **The Constant Gardener**. The demise of these characters, played so well by Raph Fiennes and Rachel Weisz in the movie, brings us to tears, not at the injustice of their murders, but at the incredible goodness of their sacrifice. Our hearts soar when we realize that human beings are capable of such, near-divine love.

Stopping one's car to save a baby wombat is not the equivalent of the anonymous man standing before a tank in Tianamen Square, but it is a step in that direction, a step we all can take. As a high school cross country coach, I know new runners cannot be expected to complete a marathon, but I also know that finishing their first mile starts a process that makes longer distances possible.

And so I look at the pictures of Laura the wombat and I smile. I feel hope and I feel joy. Evil will not have the final word. Like the Quakers, we need to intone:

Through all the tumult and the strife,
I hear that music ringing.
It finds an echo in my soul.
How can I keep from singing? Ω

Editor's Note: In 1963, Harvey Ball, of Worcester, created the Smiley Face image (see page one). He did not create it for money or attention. He helped initiate World Smile Day on the first Friday of October, 1999. It has been held annually since. After he died in 2001, the "Harvey Ball World Smile Foundation" was created to honor his name and memory. Its slogan is "improving this world, one smile at a time." Scott and Claire's daughter, Grace, whom Scott nicknamed "Chuckles," was named "Worcester's World Smile Day Ambassador" on October 5, 2001.

Serving Refugees and Asylees

by Alison Quinn-Beitscher

I am a family nurse practitioner at the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center (CHC) which is committed to providing health services focused on the complex needs of new refugees and asylees arriving in the Worcester area. We believe that everyone has a right to accessible, high quality, comprehensive, integrated, and compassionate health care, especially those at risk for chronic disease and poor health outcomes.

The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." Refugee status is granted overseas, and refugees are resettled throughout the world. Asylees must also have a well-founded fear of being persecuted as refugees, but status is generally granted after arrival in the United States.

Between 2006 and 2013, Massachusetts received 15,538 refugees/asylees with the highest influx in 2013: 2,394. In the past eight years, Central Massachusetts received 3,380 individuals; this includes 524 individuals in 2013 — 55% from Iraq, 21% from Bhutan, 10% from Somalia, 7% from the Democratic Republic of Congo, 3% from the Central African Republic, 2% from Burma, 1% from Cameroon, 0.8% from Syria, and the remainder from 15 other countries.

Upon arrival to the United States, the new refugees are connected with refugee resettlement programs (in Worcester specifically — Catholic Charities Diocese of Worcester, Ascentria Care Alliance, formerly Lutheran Social Services), and The Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center) and are provided case management services, which include access to housing, food, social security cards, Medicaid, school enrollment, health services, and linkages to employment, ESL, job training, and citizenship services.

Our work at Kennedy CHC consists primarily of conducting a refugee's first and second health assessment (typically within four weeks of arrival to the US, as well as 30 days following his/her first exam). We also provide a variety of assistance focused on helping the newly arrived individual navigate and understand our complex US health system. Most of the individuals we see for refugee health assessments continue to receive ongoing primary care at the health center.

Schnorr von Carolsfeld Bibel

As a family nurse practitioner, I, in addition to my fellow nurses, social workers, and medical assistants, have the privilege of serving as a refugee's first interaction with the health care system. Accompanied by a highly skilled interpreter (often a native to the patient's home country), I review the patient's overseas paperwork that includes any pertinent medical history, vaccine information, lab tests, and x-rays, and conduct a physical exam with careful attention to the complex psychosocial needs and barriers that may be contributing to the individual's current health situation.

Numerous challenges may arise during these first visits as the refugee has typically undergone an enormous transition in moving to this country. Adjusting to urban life, struggling to find employment, fear of security, concern about raising children in America, difficulty understanding primary care, particularly preventative health care, as well as frequent mental health issues following experiences of violence, all necessitate attention. However, in the midst of these challenges, there is also a great amount of strength in the refugee community as a whole— particularly in their resiliency, rich cultural backgrounds, strong commitment to family and community, and in their strong desire to work and provide for their children. I am frequently called to maintain an open and culturally sensitive approach very much focused on the strengths of the patient in front of me. Access to health care that addresses refugees' complex and unique physical, social, and emotional well-being are essential to successful resettlement. All of us at the Edward M. Kennedy Center feel privileged to provide these services. Ω

We believe that Jesus was a refugee, had to flee to save his life, with Saint Joseph and Mary, had to leave for Egypt... The number of these brother refugees is growing and, in these past few days, thousands more have been forced to leave their homes in order to save their life. Millions of families, millions of them, refugees from many countries and different faiths, experience in their stories tragedies and wounds that will not likely be healed. Let us be their neighbors, share their fears and uncertainty about the future, and take concrete steps to reduce their suffering.

Pope Francis

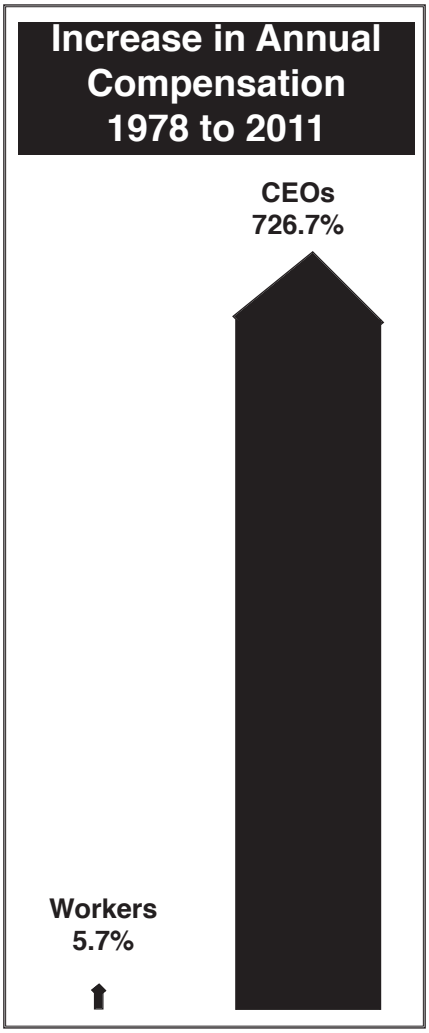
June 20, 2014, World Refugee Day

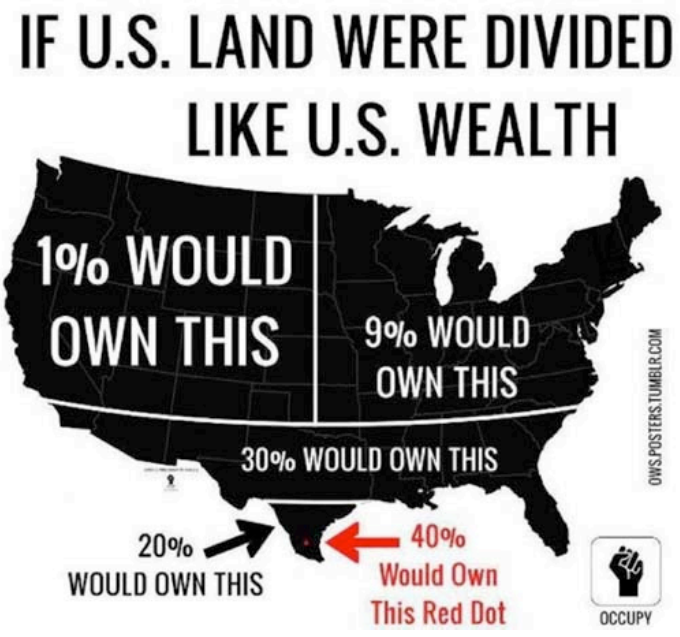
Americans for Prosperity?

While capitalism is never generous to working people, since the time of President Ronald Reagan, its impact has been especially painful; but, ironically, the changes in governmental policy which escalated this inequality were sold to the people as a means to greater prosperity. Grass-roots movements like the Taxpayer Revolt of the 1980s and today's Tea Party are largely comprised of middle-income Americans who campaign for policies that consistently enrich the wealthy, whom conservatives now like to refer to as "job creators," even though they are more accurately wage and benefit suppressors, and job out-sourcers.

If current economic policies continue, in as little as twenty years, the American wealth gap will be worse than the French wealth gap was on the eve of their revolution in 1789. The dispossessed will represent more than half of the population and 80% of the African-Americans. While the wealthy earn thousands of dollars a second, the vast majority will be homeless and hungry, a recipe for violent social unrest.

Before such an explosive situation comes into being, it is crucial that the wrong-headed policies of the Reagan, Clinton, Bush, and Obama eras be reversed to ensure living wages, as well as affordable higher education, housing, and health care, while discouraging the concentration of wealth at the top. Ω

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Letters

Anthony Russo

Dear Scott & Claire,

World War I was called the "war to end all wars," and yet the next hundred years brought far worse. Will war ever end? Will the dreadful litany of violence that has been droning on for countless generations since the fall of our ancestors ever cease? Anyone who has reached a certain age (I turned 60 this year) and studied history even superficially, indeed has an honest look at human nature (especially their own), can only answer with broken hearts, no, it won't. This is our fallen nature, the nature of our corrupt world. Do we not even see it reflected in the world of nature: in the violence of earthquakes, the fury of a tornado and the carnivorous eating habits of many animals? Is this what Adam and Even bequeathed the world in their terrible separation from the presence of the Holy One?

How is it possible that Divine Love permits this? Yes, I know all the arguments about free will and so on, but the human heart needs a response as did Job in his affliction, when God finally answered out of the whirlwind, even if it was only to sarcastically remind Job that he couldn't possibly see the big picture and who was he to be questioning God. And of course it's true. Each of us is but a tiny grain of sand in the great ocean of the cosmos and our vision is very limited. But each of us is an infinitely precious grain of that sand.

What are we to do during our short time here in our mortal flesh? What did Jesus do? Did he try to systematically end war or violence? No. He simply proclaimed the Kingdom of God in which there is no war or violence, and then he lived that. And then he died in that truth. He showed that the only way to defeat evil and death is to absorb it. Love your enemy, forgive

70 times 70. "**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.**"

We can't end war or violence, but we can spread peace in the little world we inhabit. And when we fail to do that, as I constantly do, even in my own family, then we can repent. "**A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise**" (Psalm 50). And we can find consolation personally in that we do not have to wait centuries to see the fulfilment of God's plan for the world but that for each of us it comes at the moment of our death when we enter eternity. "**Then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood**" (1 Cor. 13:12). Then we shall not only share in the resurrection of Christ in His glorified body, but also witness the transfigured reality of our crucified world now risen.

That, at any rate, is how I see it.

In God's Great Love for us,

Paul Connelly de Junco
Toronto, Canada

Editor's Note: While we agree with Paul that our human efforts will never suffice to construct an earthly utopia of peace and justice, we believe that each of us has a responsibility to try and dismantle the systems that make for war and killing. The tools for such work abound. The past and present are replete with examples of people overthrowing unjust power, reducing the flow of arms, boycotting unjust products and divesting from unjust governments and companies, and even achieving enduring reconciliations. This work does not exempt us from love of enemy. It does not supplant the moment-to-moment spreading of Christ's peace within the small worlds we inhabit, but it does communicate a practical hope. We serve an incarnational Christ who fed the hungry, embraced the excluded, confronted idolatry, and forgave publicly. In so doing, He showed us how much this broken world matters to God. The Kingdom of God is indeed among us here and now.

Dear Scott and Claire,

The Catholic Radical is hardly ever "easy reading." The June/July issue was "painful reading." We learned that wars are based on lies and fueled by lies; that even trees and vines and homes can be enemies [in the Israeli occupied West Bank]; that the IRA is made up of killers and cowards and liars, without getting into the ugly details of these evils.

You always seem to rescue me from the deepest sadness at the same time. In this issue, it was especially so in the story of Immaculée Ilibagiza. She came through [the Rwandan genocide] on the side of love....

Every day our papers contain lots of news from Mexico and the US border about the children and even infants, thousands of them, who are ending up there. Another horrifying story, even if only some of what we read is true. Honduras is the place to escape as if it were a prison or concentration camp. It's certainly a death trap for thousands.

I wish you more and more delight in the form of granddaughters or otherwise. Keep blessing us. And we all want to bless you and what happens at 52 Mason Street.

Padre Juan Wallace
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Scott & Claire,

My heart aches for the Palestinians of Gaza. I need to remind myself that families of Israeli soldiers killed and wounded are grieving too.

I'm tremendously disappointed with Obama and members of Congress. Obama talks of needing to halt the killing of civilians, but did not prevent the recent transfer of additional munitions to the IDF (Israeli military). I've called and written to Senators Warren and Markey. Israel has the right to defend itself. My response: "Israeli forces are murdering women and children."

Over the past three days, I've done five one-hour vigils in North Brookfield's busiest intersection - such as it is. It's unusual for anyone to hold something other than an elect Joe-Shmoe sign.

A few positive responses and a few hostile "Bomb 'em all!" While I was holding a sign with the name of a Palestinian boy, "aged six. Killed in Gaza," one motorist reacted "Thank the Lord."

Another of my signs read, "Obama: Stop Arming Israel" One man accused me of hating blacks. Another asked, "What did Israel do wrong?"

Discouraging how ignorant people are.

David Maher
North Brookfield, Massachusetts

Catholic Worker Calendar

Friday, October 3 — World Smile Day: Please join us in smiling.

Song of Creation by Julie Lonneman

Tuesday, October 14 & 21 — Joy of the Gospel: Please join us reading and reflecting on the second encyclical letter by Pope Francis. 7 P.M 52 Mason Street, followed by Night Prayer and refreshments.

Saturday, October 25- Sunday, November 2 — We Need Help: Please volunteer to help out here at 52 Mason Street while Claire is in the Middle East reporting on the work of Catholic Relief Services with Syrian refugees. Contact Scott (at 508 753-3588 or theresecw2@gmail.com) if you can cook a meal, house sit, or help with our bread baking and or sales.

Wednesday, October 8, 22 & November 12— Evening Prayer or Mass: Please join us in prayer and song. 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

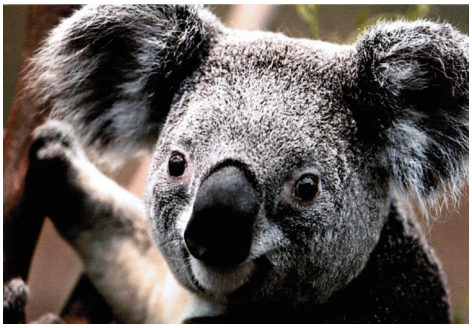
Mason Street Musings

In many ways, this summer was not easy— difficult neighbors, multiple guests struggling with addictions, and a severe shortage of funds. There were days when I had no idea how to proceed and nights when Claire lay awake worrying.

But then three people responded to our request for community: Maureen Devlin, a classmate of mine from college, Bridget Dignan, a former member of the Bethlehem Farm community in West Virginia, and Susan Schaller, a woman with a wonderful spirit. Their help came when we needed it most. Susan was able to communicate in American Sign Language for a deaf guest. Bridget inspired us with her rich community experience. Maureen helped me start a CW website. Although their visits were short, each was a gift.

For the first time since we arrived here, multiple guests reported to us that neighbors offered them drugs. When we spoke to two neighbors, the first said he'd never deal drugs so close to his own house, and the other turned out his pockets insisting he never has anything to sell. It was frustrating, to say the least.

But, once again, our despair was lifted by others. Claire called Mark Colville at the New Haven, Connecticut, Catholic Worker who was marvelously good humored. After saying drug dealers come and go, he suggested that each Catholic Worker community put together a skit of "Tales From the Hood." Louise Zwick at the Houston Catholic Worker offered a welcome shoulder to cry on regarding our trials with an undocumented guest. Although neither Mark nor Louise had definitive answers to Claire's questions, they helped us feel that we were not alone in trying to deal with them, and that trouble



does not darken the door forever.

On the monetary front, Claire and I didn't receive a financial aid package from our youngest son Aiden's college until the week the bill was due. While Holy Cross has been very generous, Aiden, Claire, and I barely scraped together enough to pay the bill, leaving us nervous as our daughter Grace's September wedding approached.

When we run short of funds to cover the needs of our guests or peacework, I am willing to beg for help, but Claire and I believe the expenses for our children are our responsibility, not yours. To cover them, Claire does free-lance writing and I coach high school cross country. Unfortunately, our house also ran short on funds, making for a general sense of financial despair. At one point, we had only two dollars and I thought of the scene in "It's a Wonderful Life" when Jimmy Stewart says, "A toast to Papa Dollar and to Mama Dollar, and if you want the old Building and Loan to stay in business, you better have a family real quick."

And then, yesterday, when I opened the mail hoping for a donation, I found an appeal, apparently addressed to every Catholic Worker community. Helen and Charles McMahon of Pnnsylvania were asking us to pray for the intercession of Dorothy Day for their daughter, Christine, a physician, who had devoted her career to helping people with cancer and now has a malignant brain tumor. As my friend Carl Siciliano used to say at the DC Catholic Worker, "Any problem that can be solved with money is only an inconvenience." Things like brain tumors are real problems.

Finally, I want to tell you why there is a koala bear on this page. Claire sold our bread today at Our Lady of Czestochowa parish where she encountered a 94-year-old woman who donated a hundred dollar bill for two loaves of bread. She was charming, as was the assistant pastor, who gave Claire the koala bear photo describing the animal as "my friend from Australia," where the priest used to live. Good people, the marvels of God's creation, and the joys of love dispel despair. By the time you receive this, I'm sure we will have enjoyed a marvelous wedding celebration. God provides. Blessed Autumn! Ω

Scott

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